

**OPENING STATEMENT OF  
THE HONORABLE VERNON J. EHLERS  
CHAIRMAN  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT, TECHNOLOGY AND STANDARDS  
COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE  
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
NPOESS Nunn-McCurdy Determination  
June 8, 2006  
2:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.  
2318 Rayburn House Office Building**

Thank you Chairman Boehlert. I am pleased the Committee is holding this hearing today to help us all understand what the recent Nunn-McCurdy decision means for this critical program.

These satellites provide data that are essential to NOAA's ability to provide accurate forecasts of severe weather, including hurricanes. Additionally, with the NPOESS program, NOAA's needs are now tied to the military's needs. The men and women of the Armed Services put themselves on the line for us every day and depend on accurate weather forecasts to perform their jobs effectively and ensure that they return home safely when those jobs are done. The importance of the NPOESS program cannot be overstated – lives ARE at stake, and letting down our fellow citizens is not an option. We must make sure that we have the satellites we need when we need them.

Unfortunately, the NPOESS program has been deeply troubled, resulting in billions of dollars in cost overruns and years of delays that ultimately triggered the Nunn-McCurdy process. The NPOESS program that has emerged from this process is significantly different from the program we started with. At first glance, the newly certified program looks reasonable, but twelve years into the program, and three years before the first launch, we are at a critical point where there is little room left to recover from further missteps. I am ready to be convinced that the Nunn-McCurdy process has produced the best possible map of the way forward. But it is up to you to convince me.

I look forward to hearing more details of the alternatives that were considered and how you worked together to arrive at the program we have before us. I also expect to hear more about what we've given up and the implications of those choices. Finally, this program was also meant to aid important atmospheric research. Many of these research capabilities have been lost, so we need to be certain that we know exactly what we're giving up as we try to create a successful satellite system out of NPOESS.

I look forward to a lively, informative discussion today. I want to thank our witnesses for being here, and I yield back the balance of my time.